

Message Text

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ACTION EB-07

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C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 1839

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EAIR IS

SUBJ: TWA BAGGAGE SECURITY

1. YEHUDA GUY, DEPUTY DIRECTOR GENERAL OF MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT, MET QUOTE ON INSTRUCTIONS OF MINISTER OF TRANSPORT UNQUOTE WITH EMBOFF (DOZIER) ON MARCH 11 TO DISCUSS TWA'S CESSATION IN EARLY FEBRUARY OF BAGGAGE CHECK PROCEDURES FOR FLIGHTS TO TEL AVIV FROM BOSTON AND NEW YORK (JFK). GUY OPENED BY SAYING HE HAD NOT COME TO MAKE A COMPLAINT, BUT TO SEEK EMBASSY ASSISTANCE. HE SEVERAL TIMES CHARACTERIZED ISRAELI-TWA RELATIONS AS EXCELLENT AND STRESSED THAT THEIR DIFFERENCES DID NOT ARISE FROM ANY PERSONAL DISAGREEMENT. HIS MESSAGE WAS THAT IF TWA IS UNABLE TO REINSTITUTE PRACTICE OF OPENING AND INSPECTING CHECKED BAGGAGE (THAT WHICH GOES INTO PLANE'S HOLD) PRIOR TO LOADING, THEN ISRAELIS WOULD REGRETFULLY BE COMPELLED TO DETAIN TWA FLIGHTS ARRIVING FROM US FOR THOROUGH BAGGAGE CHECK. IF NECESSARY NEW ISRAELI MEASURES WOULD BE IMPLEMENTED, GUY SAID, QUOTE WITHIN A MONTH OR SOONER UNQUOTE.

2. GUY REVIEWED EXCHANGE OF LETTERS BETWEEN HIMSELF AND TWA SECURITY REPRESENTATIVE (STEELE). HE SAID THAT TWA'S POSITION WAS THAT IN ABSENCE OF BAGGAGE OPENINGS THEY ACCEPTED RESPONSIBILITY FOR ANY EXPLOSIONS WHICH MIGHT OCCUR BETWEEN US GATEWAYS (BOSTON AND NEW YORK) AND UPLINE STATIONS (EUROPEAN AIRPORTS, WHERE ORIGINATING CHECKED BAGGAGE IS OPENED). ACCORDING TO GUY, TWA

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FELT THAT IS UP TO THE ISRAELIS TO BEAR RESPONSIBILITY FOR

PREVENTING REOCCURRENCE OF INCIDENTS LIKE LOD AIRPORT MASSACRE (WHERE JAPANESE TERRORISTS USED WEAPONS CARRIED IN BAGGAGE) OR HOPPER ATTACK (WHERE TWA PASSENGER SMUGGLED EXPLOSIVES IN BAGGAGE AND USED THEM FOR ATTACK IN TEL AVIV CINEMA). GUY SAID THAT TWA HAD REQUESTED THROUGH HIM MINISTERIAL CONCURRENCE IN DECISION TO DISCONTINUE FORMER BAGGAGE SEARCH PRACTICE BUT GOI UNWILLING TO DO SO. IN FACT ISRAELIS HAD EXPRESSED VIEW THAT CURRENT SITUATION DEMANDS TIGHTER, NOT RELAXED, SECURITY PROCEDURES. TWA HAS BEEN ASKED TO RECONSIDER ITS DECISION BUT ISRAELIS ARE NOT OPTIMISTIC IN THIS REGARD.

3. GUY POINTED OUT THAT TWA IS THE LARGEST FOREIGN AIRLINE SERVING ISRAEL, AND HE EMPHASIZED HIS CONCERN THAT TWA FAILURE TO INSPECT CHECKED BAGGAGE COULD HAVE ADVERSE IMPACT ON OTHER FOREIGN AIRLINES, ALL OF WHOM, HE SAID, ARE NOW OBSERVING ISRAELI SECURITY GUIDELINES FOR THEIR SERVICES HERE. SOME, HE SAID, OFFER TEL AVIV FLIGHTS FROM POINTS AS DISTANT AS THE UNITED STATES (E.G. AIR FRANCE'S FAR EAST SERVICE). GUY RECOGNIZED THAT IT IS MOST UNPLEASANT FOR PASSENGERS ARRIVING AFTER A FIFTEEN-HOUR FLIGHT TO BE DETAINED FOR AN HOUR OR MORE WHILE THEIR BAGGAGE IS BEING OPENED AND INSPECTED. BUT, HE SAID, HIS ALTERNATIVES WERE VERY LIMITED.

4. TWA, ACCORDING TO GUY, MAINTAINS THAT ITS POSITION IS SUPPORTED BY CURRENT FAA/CIA ASSESSMENT THAT THERE IS LITTLE LIKELIHOOD OF TERRORIST ATTACK ORIGINATING FROM US. GUY CONCURRED THAT POSSIBILITY OF ATTACK ORIGINATING FROM US MAY BE LOWER THAN FROM ANYWHERE ELSE IN THE WORLD AT PRESENT. BUT PALESTINIAN INTELLIGENCE, HE SAID, WOULD SOON DISCOVER AND EXPLOIT ANY WEAKENING OF TWA'S SECURITY MEASURES FOR ISRAEL-BOUND FLIGHTS. GUY ALSO MADE POINT THAT EVEN WITHOUT TERRORIST INCIDENT TWA BUSINESS MIGHT WELL SUFFER IF PASSENGERS BELIEVED THEIR SAFETY WAS NOT ADEQUATELY ASSURED. ISRAELIS ARE PARTICULARLY CONCERNED AT POSSIBLE REOCCURRENCE OF HOPPER-TYPE INCIDENT IF WORD GETS AROUND THAT TWA IS NO LONGER OPENING CHECKED BAGGAGE. (GUY HAS JUST RECENTLY REQUESTED ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT AN FAA BULLETIN CONCERNING A SUITCASE BOMB.)

5. WHEN ASKED ABOUT ADEQUACY OF MECHANICAL DEVICES FOR CHECKING BAGGAGE, GUY RELATED DEMONSTRATION HE ARRANGED FOR TWA IN NEW CONFIDENTIAL

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YORK, IN WHICH X-RAY MACHINE OPERATOR SEVERAL TIMES FAILED TO DETECT IN FALSE-BOTTOM ATTACHE CASE A CONCEALED PISTOL, RDX EXPLOSIVE AND PLASTIC GRENADES CONCEALED IN DOLL. WHEN ADVISED THAT CASE SHOULD BE LOOKED AT MORE CAREFULLY, OPERATOR DISCOVERED ONLY THE PISTOL. ISRAELIS CONCLUDED THAT SUREST SECURITY MEASURE IS CAREFUL HAND SEARCH.

6. WHEN ASKED FOR HIS VIEW WHETHER HAND SEARCH MEASURES ARE

NECESSARY FOR TWA'S FEEDER LINES IN US (E.G., KANSAS CITY), GUY SAID THAT ISRAELIS ARE ASKING ONLY FOR GATEWAYS BOSTON AND NEW YORK. EL AL HE SAID TREATS ITS OWN FEEDER CONNECTIONS AS IF THEY WERE ORIGINATING FLIGHTS, SO THAT ALL BAGGAGE IS AGAIN CHECKED. HE SAID THAT THE SAME APPLIES TO SECURITY MEASURES APPLIED AT CHARLES DE GAULLE AIRPORT BY THE FRENCH.

7. COMMENT: WE BELIEVE ISRAELIS WILL INDEED IMPLEMENT SPECIAL ARRIVAL CHECKS FOR TWA IF EXAMINATION OF HOLD BAGGAGE IS NOT RESUMED. REGARDLESS OF WHO WOULD BE RESPONSIBLE FOR RESULTANT LONG DELAYS, WE THINK THAT PASSENGER DISSATISFACTION MUST INEVITABLY REACT AGAINST TWA, BOTH BECAUSE OF DELAY AT BEN GURION AND CONCERN ABOUT SAFETY ON TWA WHEN WORD GETS AROUND THAT BAGGAGE IS NOT OPENED. IN ADDITION, AS MEMBERS OF THE OFFICIAL AMERICAN COMMUNITY HERE AND AS IT WERE CAPTIVE PASSENGERS OF ONLY AMERICAN AIRLINE WITH SERVICE TO AND FROM ISRAEL, WE ARE KEENLY AWARE THAT TWA'S BAGGAGE SEARCH MEASURES HAVE NOT ALWAYS BEEN THE MOST THOROUGH. LOSS OF TWA PLANE IN SEPT ,1974, HOPPER ATTACK AND AMMUNITION BAG INCIDENT (75 TEL AVIV 7255) ALL REFLECTED BADLY ON TWA SECURITY AND WERE WIDELY REPORTED IN ISRAELI PRESS. IN CIRCUMSTANCES, WE RECOMMEND THAT DEPT URGE TWA TO REINSTATE FORMER PROCEDURE FOR INSPECTION OF CHECKED BAGGAGE IN NEW YORK AND BOSTON.
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